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# Frank Luther Mott

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## Frank Luther Mott

The stories in this issue of THE PALIMPSEST are by one of Iowa's most distinguished native sons — Frank Luther Mott. Born on a farm in Keokuk County, Mott delineates life as he knew it growing up and working by the side of his father in his country newspapers in What Cheer, Tipton, Audubon, and Marengo. The character of his Quaker parents left an indelible impression on the mind and personality of their talented son.

David C. Mott, the father of Frank Luther Mott, was born in Washington County, Ohio, in 1858, and came to Iowa with his parents — George W. and Abigail B. Mott — in 1863. David was educated in Keokuk County and in the Friends Boarding School at Barnesville, Ohio. He began teaching school in 1877 but turned to farming two years later. In 1881 he married Mary E. Tipton of West Branch. Four children — Russell, Frank, Ethel, and Mildred — were born of this union.

In 1888 David C. Mott forsook the farm to become a country editor and publisher. He bought the What Cheer *Patriot*, which had been established in 1880 in a thriving coal mining town. For a quarter of a century, from 1888 to 1912, David



C. Mott was identified with the following newspapers and communities:

Newspaper	Years	Population		
		1890	1900	1910
What Cheer Patriot	1888-1892	3,246	2,746	1,720
Tipton Advertiser	1893-1897	1,599	2,513	2,048
Audubon Republican	1897-1905	1,310	1,866	1,928
Marengo Republican	1907-1913	1,710	2,007	1,786

His son, Frank Luther Mott, served as co-editor of the *Marengo Republican*. According to Harold Ellis, business manager and co-publisher of the *Marengo Pioneer-Republican* since 1930, the paper edited by David C. and Frank Luther Mott "possessed a literary quality probably never equalled by any other Marengo publisher."

David C. Mott served two terms in the Iowa General Assembly. From 1911 to 1919 he was a member of the Iowa Board of Parole. He then became editorial assistant in the Historical, Memorial, and Art Department in Des Moines, serving in this capacity until retirement in 1937. He died in 1941.

Frank Luther Mott inherited many of the qualities of his father. In addition to a brilliant mind, he possessed unflagging industry, a vivid imagination, and a rare though quiet sense of humor. He attended Simpson College from 1903 to 1906, received his Ph.B. from the University of Chicago in 1907; his M.A. from Columbia University in 1919, and his Ph.D. from Columbia in 1928.



In 1910 he married Vera H. Ingram of Mount Ayr. The Motts have one daughter — Mildred Ingram Wedel. In 1914 young Frank struck out on his own as editor and publisher of the *Grand Junction Globe*. In 1917 he forsook the role of country editor for the teaching profession, excelling in research and writing. He taught in Brooklyn, New York, but returned to Iowa and Simpson College in 1919 where he taught English until 1921.

During the next twenty-one years Frank Luther Mott was intimately associated with the State University of Iowa, beginning as an Assistant Professor of English and serving as Director of the School of Journalism from 1927 to 1942. He was joint editor and publisher of *The Midland*, 1925-1930, and associate editor from 1930 to 1933. He was Editor-in-Chief of the *Journalism Quarterly* from 1930 to 1934.

Scores of honors have been awarded Frank Mott, including the Pulitzer Prize in history for his *A History of American Magazines* in 1939. Other outstanding books are his *American Journalism: A History* (1941), *Jefferson and the Press* (1943), *Golden Multitudes* (1947). He has served as editor of several important news series. Through it all he has remained the same quiet and modest soul who endeared himself to thousands during his sojourn in Iowa.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN